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HEADQUARTERS

UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96222

Office of the Special Assistant to COMUSMACV



MACJOIB

10 March 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD:

SUBJECT: Meeting at Headquarters II Corps

1. On 8 March 1968, COMUSMACV and the Chief, Vietnamese Joint General Staff, visited Headquarters II Corps and were briefed on the situation and future plans by the Commanding General and his staff. Principal commanders and advisors present were:

MG W.R. Peers, DCG, I Fld Fc
MG Lu Mong Lan, CG, II Corps
MG C.P. Stone, CG, 4th Inf Div
BG L.H. Schweiter, CG, 173d Abn Bde (Sep)
BG Nguyen Van Hieu, CG, 22d Inf Div
COL Truong Quang An, CG, 23d Inf Div
COL J.W. Barnes, DSA, II Corps
COL H.A. Barber III, SA, 23d Inf Div
COL P.J. Cahill, SA, 24th Sp Zone
LTC Chau Van Tien, CO, 24th Sp Zone

2. Following a presentation by II Corps staff members, General Lu Lan expressed his concern over the following developments: 1) significant movement of enemy forces from the Kontum to the Ban Me Thuot area; 2) enemy reinforcements in the areas of Binh Dinh and Tan Hoa, and 3) the recent shelling of Cam Ranh. He stated that his priorities were to expand security belts around the cities, keep the important roads open, and assure build-up of adequate supplies.

3. COMUSMACV spoke to the group, noting that an offensive spirit, reflecting General Vien's orders, was apparent in the briefings. He stated that this was most timely as the enemy had suffered his greatest defeat yet throughout Vietnam and had sustained losses numbering some 50,000 killed, 8,000 detainees (of whom 25% can be expected to turn up as prisoners of war), and over 14,000 individual and 2,000 crew-served weapons. Our losses were also heavy (over 2,000 FVMAF and about 4,000 ARVN killed) but were small in comparison. He assumed, as borne out by evidence, that the enemy's morale and

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effectiveness were low and thus now is the time to move out. "General Vien and I have issued orders accordingly". COMUSMACV stated that it is time to change the psychology expressed by widespread talk, particularly around Saigon, about the next enemy attack. "The enemy has been severely defeated; let's go ahead and talk about our attack and get the offensive spirit into the entire chain of command!" COMUSMACV emphasized that we must use being the full weight of psychological warfare against the weakened and demoralized enemy. We are on the threshold of bringing in increased numbers of ralliers if we use a strong psywar program. "We must develop a positive attitude and talk about our attack, not theirs."

4. COMUSMACV noted that he and General Vien have agreed that our posture must be improved as follows:

a. We need M16's and hope to have 5,000 for II Corps within the next two weeks, although some may need buffers. It is an ideal weapon, is superior to the AK-47 in all ways, and is an ideal arm for the Vietnamese infantryman. However, it must be handled by professionals, must receive good care, and all officers and noncommissioned officers must regularly supervise cleaning, maintenance, and training on the weapon. It has been our experience that it will jam in combat - this is due to a lack of care, training, and supervision. Training must be given before the weapon is issued and its use closely supervised afterwards. Emphasizing the need for supervision on the M16 will yield other benefits: it will emphasize the importance of the chain of command and point up that leaders must supervise all things. Soldiers tend to be like children; if we follow through properly on their training and use of the M16, for example, it will help develop good habits and influence other things they do. More M16's will be provided as soon as they arrive from CONUS. In addition, M60 machine guns will be furnished as well as a new lightweight mortar, more M79's, and LAW's. Thus, from now on, the RVNAF will be receiving more modern weapons. COMUSMACV has pressed for increased production and hopes that ARVN will be 100% M16 equipped by next summer.

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b. The Ban Me Thuot area poses a special problem with two NVA divisions in the area. However, COMUSMACV expressed the belief that ARVN could cope with the situation although he was prepared to reinforce with U.S. units if required. If the enemy attacks at Ban Me Thuot, he exposes himself to great risks; therefore, we must remain highly mobile and aggressive (taking fullest advantage of the new M16's) and take the fight to the enemy. In all actions, the most important matters are reconnaissance, with emphasis on long range patrols (LRP's), and the effective use of intelligence. "If you find the enemy, I can provide B-52 strikes, ~~not 25 or 30 in a matter of hours~~. Whereas it formerly took days to plan missions, we now have the capability of diverting in a matter of hours. We can catch the enemy in his

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base camps and after B-52 strikes, we must follow up." We should put more planning and resources into our LRP's. We should form combined US-Vietnamese LRP's and gain many obvious advantages. General Vien recognized the importance of LRP's when he established the school at Duc My. COMUSMACV suggested that Generals Peers and Lu Lan get together to work up a plan of action in this regard, ~~saying that the enemy could not handle this type of action.~~ Developing this theme further, COMUSMACV noted that little benefit usually comes from searches in the jungle; we should use our LRP's to locate the enemy and could then call in B-52 strikes. We must exploit this new air-strike capability.

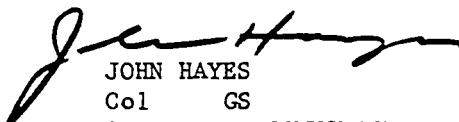
c. We must bolster the RF/PF. Since the enemy did not succeed in his Tet offensive in the cities, we can expect him to concentrate on the RF/PF. They must be aided in all ways: fortifications, logistics, etc. Psywar operations can counter the enemy psywar and propaganda operations. We must go out and help the RF/PF.

5. COMUSMACV concluded by congratulating the division commanders of II Corps. "No divisions performed better." Whereas all divisions did well, COMUSMACV stated that those in II Corps saw the attack coming, did not stand-down for Tet, were ready, showed excellent tactical judgement, and executed effective maneuvers. RVNAF has much to be proud of. In the face of this major enemy attack - military, political, and psychological - where the enemy thought that ARVN would be low in morale and spirits, there was no up-rising and there were no traitors. There were **very few** units that did not perform well. Furthermore, there were many good actions by the RF/PF. The officer corps can be proud: they demonstrated their loyalty and solid professionalism and that they are willing to serve their country. "We now have a grave responsibility. We must go on the offensive and reverse the thinking - it is a rare opportunity to attack an enemy who is weakened and is having supply problems. Through this we can shorten the war."

6. Following COMUSMACV's remarks, General Stone explained a new concept in reconnaissance. He has taken all reconnaissance elements from guard and other duties and has massed them. In the experiments so far, they have succeeded in locating and killing some 20 to 50 enemy per day. The 2/17 with two Air Cav troops and 1 ground troop have been working together for about 2 weeks. He also is using the 1/10 Cav (minus 1 troop) augmented with a special Engineer group with ALVP bridging and a platoon of the 2/10 Avn Co for visual recon. Backing this force are the medium and long range patrols, a tank company, Snoopy aircraft, and a reaction force of not less than a battalion, of which one company is ready to go with transport standing by. The entire package is tied together and will be given progressively tougher targets to attack. General Peers stated that he needed a Cavalry Troop badly in Binh Dinh. General Westmoreland noted that he would try to make one available. COMUSMACV expressed approval of General Stone's concept and plan, noting that the enemy was particularly vulnerable at this time with many new replacements and lack

of familiarity with the terrain where employed.

7. Information concerning a recent rallier, a voluble cooperative Captain, was presented. The rallier stated that leaflets are comparatively ineffective as internal control is very tight and no one will risk picking up a leaflet or being caught with one. On the other hand, "talking birds" are very effective as all get the message. With respect to leaflets, he stated that long articles explaining the true situation are more effective than the short "Rally - All Is Lost" types. The rallier brought out that morale was very low and that his men were reluctant to attack because of the incessant pounding by artillery and air. In response to a COMUSMACV question as to why this did not result in more ralliers, the efficiency of the 3-man cell (which prevades all echelons) was cited: no one knows whom to trust.


JOHN HAYES
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Handwritten note:
The above is a copy of the original report.